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DEEPWATER News

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Collins: Deepwater Program's Improved Capabilities "Absolutely Critical" to Ensuring U.S. Maritime Security

Testifying on Apr. 20 to the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation. From left, Margaret T. Wrightson, director of homeland security and justice issues for the GAO; RADM Patrick M. Stillman, Deepwater's program executive officer; and Commandant of the Coast Guard Adm. Thomas H. Collins. (Photo Courtesy of House of Representatives)

Commandant of the Coast Guard Adm. Thomas H. Collins told Congress Apr. 20 that a recently revised implementation plan will posture the Deepwater Program to play an even greater role in reducing the future risk of a terrorist event in the United States. "This year's approval of a revised post-9/11 Deepwater Mission Need Statement and Implementation Plan are the most significant programmatic developments since we awarded the Deepwater contract in 2002," he said.

Testifying to the House Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation, the Commandant expressed his appreciation to the Department of Homeland Security, the administration, and Congress for their "strong support" in positioning the Coast Guard for its 21st-century mission set.

"Key in fiscal year 2006," he said, "is getting our capabilities right." The performance of individual platforms and Deepwater's overall system of systems will be evaluated over time to determine the eventual capacity—numbers of assets—needed to achieve Deepwater's performance-based goals. For this reason, Collins said, the revised post-9/11 Deepwater Implementation Plan indicates a range of assets in some categories at Program completion.

Collins described how the revised Deepwater plan would result in a Coast Guard possessing the 21st-century technologies necessary to safeguard the nation and reduce the risk of a terrorist attack. "These enhanced capabilities were not included in the original Deepwater Program," he said. "However, these capabilities are absolutely critical to ensuring the maritime security of America and its $750 billion maritime transportation system." The Commandant also emphasized the importance of Deepwater's improved C4ISR systems in achieving higher levels of maritime domain awareness.

Deepwater's revised Mission Need Statement and Implementation Plan were developed and approved following an intensive performance-gap analysis that identified the need for more capable functional requirements to perform post-9/11 missions effectively.

Rear Adm. Patrick M. Stillman, Deepwater's program executive officer, and Margaret T. Wrightson, director of homeland security and justice issues for the Government Accountability Office (GAO), also testified to the subcommittee.

Wrightson, commenting on management issues associated with the Deepwater acquisition, complimented the Coast Guard for its responsiveness in addressing the numerous recommendations GAO has made to

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improve program execution and oversight. She said that she was "absolutely satisfied with the level of cooperation of the Coast Guard," noting she felt the Deepwater Program was "many weeks, not many months" from closing out other recommendations.

"Even with best effort some of these problems take time to resolve," she said in describing the challenge of managing a program of Deepwater's scope and complexity. "GAO has warned," Wrightson said, "that the Coast Guard's acquisition strategy, which relies on a prime contractor ('systems integrator') to identify and deliver the assets needed, carries substantial risk."

In his statement for the record and responses to questions from subcommittee members, Collins said that he viewed the Coast Guard's cooperation with GAO as a partnership. "We take our stewardship seriously, and we will achieve program success through performance measures and accountability," he said. "Simply stated, the GAO is making active contributions to help us successfully execute this critical Deepwater Program."

Collins also said that Deepwater's Coast Guard-industry team (Integrated Coast Guard Systems, a joint venture of Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman) marked numerous important milestones during the past 12 months, including C4ISR upgrades to legacy cutters, the keel laying for the first National Security Cutter, and accelerated re-engining of HH-65 helicopters.

"The revised Deepwater Implementation Plan represents a significant investment in ensuring Coast Guard mission performance now and in the future," he said.

By Gordon I. Peterson

U.S. Coast Guard Delivers Re-engined HH-65 Helicopter to Air Station Atlantic City

WASHINGTON – On April 15, the U.S. Coast Guard transferred the first of five re-engined HH-65 Dolphin helicopters to Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City, N.J., under the Deepwater modernization and recapitalization program. The remaining four helicopters are scheduled to be delivered by late May to ensure the unit has a full complement of aircraft.

Capt. James Hubbard, CO of Airstation Atlantic City, and U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo at Coast Guard Air Station Atlantic City on April 15. (Photo by PA1 Kim Smith)

U.S. Rep. Frank LoBiondo (R-NJ), chairman of the House Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation Subcommittee, said at the press briefing, "I think that it's very fitting that the first of these refitted helicopters will be stationed here. This will greatly increase our ability to conduct search and rescue operations, but also since 9/11, we've known that we have to improve our air assets and give the Coast Guard what it needs to handle its mission."

The helicopter was upgraded with Turbomeca Arriel

Multi-Mission Cutter Helicopter

EADS Eurocopter MH-65C

Speed: 160 KTS
Range: 400 NM
Endurance: 4 hours
Crew: 2 (Officers) 1 (Enlisted)
Armament: .50 Cal Precision Fire Weapon, M242 .60Cal MG

Redesignated as the Multi-Mission Cutter Helicopter (MCH), the HH-65 will undergo a Service Life Extension Plan (SLEP) that will yield a like-new aircraft to be introduced in 2007. The MCH will assist in the missions of search and rescue, enforcement of laws and treaties, as well as maritime homeland security missions.

- The MCH will have increased communications, increased Common Operating Picture (COP) capability, and night/all-weather capability with radar and Electro-Optic/Infrared sensors.
- The MCH will be capable of deployment from flight deck equipped cutters like the NSC and OPC.
- The MCH will have rapid response capability and be used to extend classification and identification ability of the cutter on which it is embarked.
- The asset pairing of a flight deck equipped cutter with a deployed MCH will allow the Commanding Officer of the ship to utilize the air asset to investigate, classify, and identify a threat and then to vector the cutter to the target.
- The MCH meets the requirements associated with cutters deploying on defense operations and peacetime military engagements, and may also be used to meet non-Deepwater aviation demand missions currently being conducted by existing HH-65s.

2C2 turboshaft engines that provide flight safety improvements, substantial power, and flight control.

The HH-65 re-engining project is the first step in converting the 65s into the Multi-mission Cutter Helicopter (MCH). (See Box Above). The re-engining was separated from the full MCH conversion and accelerated in response to immediate safety and reliability issues with legacy HH-65 engines. The subsequent steps in the MCH conversion will fully missionize these helicopters for post 9/11 Deepwater capability requirements.

Delivery of re-engined HH-65 Dolphin helicopters in Atlantic City, NJ. (Photo by PA1 Kim Smith)

Twin-engine HH-65 helicopters are particularly well-suited for search and rescue, fisheries patrols, maritime security, border patrol, monitoring illegal immigration, and drug interdiction. The modernization effort to re-engine all HH-65 helicopters in the fleet with the upgraded engine includes the provision of kits by American Eurocopter (AEC), a division of EADS North America. The conversion kits facilitate installation of extended heat shields, a reconfigured cockpit, and specialized avionics software needed for shipboard operations.

"We are committed to ensuring the safety of our pilots and their air crew as they perform their vital missions to protect and serve the American people," said Rear Adm. Patrick M. Stillman, the Program Executive Officer of the Deepwater Program.

The modernization process is being conducted by the Integrated Coast Guard Systems (ICGS) team, a joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Northrop Grumman Corporation, in partnership with the U.S. Coast Guard.

The actual re-engining is being performed at Aircraft Repair and Supply Center (ARSC) in Elizabeth City, N.C.

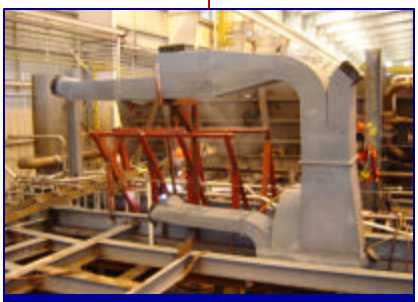
By PAC Jeffrey Murphy

Shipbuilding 101: A Look at Constructing the First National Security Cutter At Ingalls Shipyard

The National Security Cutter is comprised of 45 compartments, all of which are currently being constructed simultaneously.

Assemblies are joined together and form the necessary support of the engine room.

The lower level compartment is awaiting placement in the new National Security Cutter.



Ventilation systems are built, and will be installed in the berthing areas.

A second deck is welded around the keel as the assembly of the cutter continues in Pascagoula, Miss.

Fire mains and return plumbing are newly installed on each component as it comes off the line.

Each assembly is independently completed, then welded together with other compartments for the new National Security Cutter.

A completed compartment is added to the keel of the National Security Cutter to outline the framework.

(Photos Courtesy of Northrop Grumman Ship Systems)